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Message Text

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ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W
----------057863 191412Z /53
O 191342Z JAN 78
FM USDEL SECRETARY JERUSALEM
TO WHITE HOUSE IMMEDIATE
SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 SECTO 1045

EXDIS TREAT AS NODIS

WHITE HOUSE FOR THE PRESIDENT AND DR. BRZEZINSKI

DEPARTMENT FOR S/S-TARNOFF

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, IX, EG, US, XF, OVIP (VANCE, CYRUS)
SUBJECT: SECRETARY VANCE'S MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER BEGIN

1. SECRETARY AND AMBASSADOR MET WITH BEGIN, YADIN AND WEIZMAN LITTLE AFTER MIDNIGHT JANUARY 19. CABINET MEETING WAS JUST BREAKING UP AS SECRETARY ARRIVED, HAVING BEEN IN SESSION MORE OR LESS CONTINUOUSLY SINCE 8:00PM. BEGIN WAS IN SURPRISINGLY COMPOSED AND RELAXED MOOD, ESPECIALLY IN LIGHT OF HIS EARLIER TELEPHONE CONVERSATIONS WITH SECRETARY WHICH HE HAD SEEMED CLEARLY SHAKEN BY EVENTS OF EVENING. EVIDENTLY, CABINET MEETING AND HIS SESSION WITH KAMEL HAD PROVIDED SOME CATHARSIS.

2. SECRETARY VANCE BEGAN BY BRIEFING PRIME MINISTER ON HIS
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TELEPHONE CONVERSATIONS WITH PRESIDENT CARTER AND PRESIDENT SADAT. HE SAID THAT BOTH HE AND PRESIDENT CARTER HAD URGED SADAT TO CONTINUE THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE TALKS, AT LEAST THROUGH THURSDAY. SADAT'S RESPONSE HAD BEEN THAT UNFORTUNATELY HE HAD GONE TOO FAR TO REVERSE. BUT, HOWEVER, HE HAD DECIDED IN LIGHT OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S CALL THAT HE WISHED THE MILITARY COMMITTEE

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TO CONTINUE ITS WORK. SADAT HAD TOLD THE SECRETARY THAT
HE UNDERSTOOD THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTINUING THE PROCESS, THAT
PERHAPS HIS DECISION TO BREAK OFF THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE
TALKS HAD BEEN A MISTAKE BUT THAT HE HAD GONE TOO FAR
TO REVERSE IT IMMEDIATELY.

3. BEGIN THEN RECOUNTED TO THE SECRETARY THE NATURE
OF HIS 45-MINUTE MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTER KAMEL.
HE SAID IT WAS LARGELY TAKEN UP BY KAMEL'S GIVING A
SERIES OF REASONS FOR THE BREAKING OFF OF THE TALKS. AMONG
THESE WERE VARIOUS PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY THE ISRAELIS WHICH
INDICATED A CONTINUING INTRANSIGENCE ON BASIC ISSUES,
SEVERAL NEGOTIATING POSITIONS ASSUMED BY THE ISRAELIS IN THE
EARLY SESSIONS--SUCH AS REFUSAL TO ACCEPT THE PRESIDENT'S
ASWAN LANGUAGE IN TOTO, BEGIN'S TOAST AT THE STATE DINNER
TUESDAY NIGHT WHICH WAS "EMBARRASSING TO HIM AND DISTINCTLY
NOT HELPFUL," AND THE SENSE OF PRESSURE THE EGYPTIAN
DELEGATION FELT ITSELF TO BE UNDER IN JERUSALEM FROM THE
ISRAELI PRESS AND THE GENERAL ATMOSPHERE. BEGIN
SAID THAT KAMEL HAD INDICATED HE CONSIDERED HIS
RECALL TO BE IN THE NATURE OF A SUSPENSION RATHER
THAN A TERMINATION, AND HE HOPED WAYS COULD BE FOUND
TO RECONVENE THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE SOON.

4. BEGIN SAID THAT HE HAD THEN RESPONDED IN MEASURED
TONES TO KAMEL CITING AN "AVALANCHE OF STATEMENTS" FROM
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THE EGYPTIAN SIDE WHICH HAD BEEN OFFENSIVE TO THE
ISRAELIS IN RECENT DAYS. AMONG THESE HE HAD CITED AN
EGYPTIAN PRESS COMMENTARY IN LATE DECEMBER WHICH HAD SAID
HE WAS "LUCKY NOT TO BE BEATEN UP AT ISMAILIA IN LIGHT
OF HIS POSITIONS," THE REFERENCE TO HIM AS "A SHYLOCK,"
RECENT THREATS OF "ANOTHER OCTOBER," AND MOST RECENTLY
SADAT'S INTERVIEW IN OCTOBER MAGAZINE. BEGIN SAID HE
MADE CLEAR TO KAMEL THAT HE HOPED THE EGYPTIANS WOULD
COME BACK SOON AND THE ISRAELIS WOULD BE READY TO
RESUME THE TALKS AT ANY TIME. HE ALSO SAID THAT HE
TOLD KAMEL HE WOULD "KEEP HIS SENTIMENT FOR PRESIDENT
SADAT DESPITE EVERYTHING WHICH HAS HAPPENED."

5. BEGIN THEN DISCUSSED FOR ABOUT 15 MINUTES THE SIGNIFICANCE
OF WHAT HE TERMED "THIS ASTONISHING DEVELOPMENT." HE
AND THE SECRETARY AGREED THAT THE NEGOTIATIONS WERE
MAKING GOOD PROGRESS AND THAT THERE WAS NO JUSTIFICATION
FROM THAT STANDPOINT FOR THE ACTION. BEGIN SAID
"IT'S A WHIM, SADAT IS A WHIMSICAL MAN." HE WENT
ON TO DEFEND IN A MATTER-OF-FACT WAY HIS TOAST AT
THE DINNER SAYING THAT POLITICAL SPEECHES AT SUCH
DINNERS WERE PERFECTLY CUSTOMARY, AND HE SHOULD

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NOT HAVE TAKEN OFFENSE. "WHAT WAS WRONG WITH IT?"
THE SECRETARY DID NOT REPLY.

6. BEGIN THEN TOLD THE SECRETARY THAT THE SUBJECT
OF WHAT TO DO NEXT HAD BEEN DISCUSSED AT THE CABINET
MEETING, AND THAT HE HAD CONVEYED THE SECRETARY'S
VIEWS TO THE CABINET TO THE EFFECT THAT IT WOULD BE MOST
UNFORTUNATE NOT TO AGREE TO CONTINUE THE MILITARY
TALKS NOW THAT SADAT HAS SAID HE WOULD LIKE THEM TO
CONTINUE. IN LIGHT OF THE SECRETARY'S VIEWS, THE
CABINET HAD DECIDED TO REVERSE ITS INITIAL DECISION
TO REFUSE TO CONTINUE THE MILITARY TALKS. INSTEAD, THE
DECISION WAS TO KEEP SADAT'S PROPOSAL UNDER CONSIDERATION AND THE
DOOR OPEN PENDING HEARING THE SECRETARY'S REPORT ON HIS
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MEETINGS WITH SADAT FRIDAY. GENERAL TAMIR AND THE
OTHER MEMBERS OF WEIZMAN'S TEAM WILL REMAIN FOR THE
TIME BEING IN CAIRO.

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ACTION NODS-00

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O 191342Z JAN 78
FM USDEL SECRETARY JERUSALEM
TO WHITE HOUSE IMMEDIATE
SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE
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INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
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AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 SECTO 1045

EXDIS TREAT AS NODIS

WHITE HOUSE FOR THE PRESIDENT AND DR. BRZEZINSKI

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7. YADIN SAID THAT THERE HAD BEEN A GREAT DEAL OF STRONG OPPOSITION IN THE CABINET TO KEEPING THE DOOR OPEN IN THIS WAY. HE SAID IT WOULD BE VERY IMPORTANT TO TRY TO AVOID A SADAT SPEECH ON SATURDAY BEFORE THE PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY WHICH IS TOUGH AND PROVOCATIVE. BEGIN INTERJECTED THAT OBVIOUSLY ONE CANNOT PREVENT HIM SPEAKING SINCE HE HAS EVERY RIGHT TO DO SO, BUT HE HOPED THE TONE WOULD BE "GOOD".

8. THE SECRETARY SAID THAT KAMEL HAD MADE A PUBLIC STATEMENT AFTER RETURNING TO THE HOTEL FROM BEGIN'S OFFICE THAT THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS HAD NOT BEEN BROKEN OFF; RATHER HE WAS GOING BACK ON"CONSULTATION". BOTH BEGIN AND VANCE AGREED THIS WAS GOOD AND A HOPEFUL SIGN. THE SECRETARY URGED BEGIN TO KEEP "THINGS AS
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COOL AS POSSIBLE." HE SAID THERE MANY EXAMPLES IN HIS PAST NEGOTIATING EXPERIENCE OF SUCH CRISES AND THEY USUALLY CAN BE OVERCOME.

9. AS THE MEETING WAS ABOUT TO BREAK UP, WEIZMAN SAID HE DID NOT WANT TO FLASH ANY RED LIGHTS, BUT THE SECRETARY SHOULD KNOW THAT THE ISRAELIS ARE WATCHING VERY CAREFULLY THE INCREASING RAPPROCHEMENT BETWEEN SYRIA AND IRAQ, AND WERE APPREHENSIVE ABOUT THEIR BEING "NAUGHTY." HE ALSO CITED THE GROWING ARMED BUILD-UP IN SOUTH LEBANON AS A WORRISOME FACTOR AND THE POSSIBLITY THAT BOUMEDIENE "RUNNING AROUND THE AREA" WAS A PRELUDE TO SOME KIND OF BLOW-UP IN SOUTH LEBANON WHICH "WOULD BE THE LAST THING WE NEED AT THIS MOMENT." THE SECRETARY AGREED THERE WERE SOM WORRISOME SIGNS.

10. BEGIN AND VANCE AGREED THEY WOULD MEET SOMETIME THURSDAY AT BEGIN'S CONVENIENCE FOR A SERIOUS REVIEW OF THE OVERALL SITUATION. BEGIN SEEMED VERY PLEASED WITH THE MEETING AND IT ENDED ON A SOBER BUT GUARDEDLY HOPEFUL NOTE.

11. FOR AMMAN, JIDDA AND CAIRO: IN TALKING WITH HOST GOVERNMENTS ABOUT CURRENT SITUATION AND WHAT IS IN PROSPECT FOR PEACE NEGOTIATIONS, YOU MAY REFER TO THIS CONVERSA-TION AND DRAW ON FOLLOWING ANALYSIS TO EXTENT YOU FEEL THIS WILL BE HELPFUL IN CALMING REACTIONS. YOU SHOULD SAY THAT DOOR IS OPEN FOR RESUMPTION OF POLITICAL COMMITTEE NEGOTIATIONS AND WE ARE HOPEFUL THAT SECURITY COMMITTEE WILL MEET AS SCHEDULED THIS WEEKEND.

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SECRETARY WILL BE MEETING AGAIN WITH BEGIN TODAY AND,
LATER, WITH DAYAN. HE WILL MEET AS SCHEDULED WITH
SADAT TOMORROW. OBVIOUSLY, A FURTHER ASSESSMENT
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OF WHAT COMES NEXT MUST WAIT ON THOSE TALKS.

12. YOU SHOULD EMPHASIZE.. #923;34, THAT WHILE NOT
UNDERESTIMATING SERIOUSNESS OF EGYPTIAN MOVE AND
DEGREE OF EGYPTIAN CONCERN, NEGOTIATIONS YESTERDAY
WERE SERIOUS, CONSTRUCTIVE AND IN GOOD ATMOSPHERE.
WE SEE NO REASON WHY THEY CANNOT BE RESUMED FROM THAT
POINT WHEN PARTIES ARE READY. DISCUSSION HAS FOCUSSED,
OF COURSE, ON HOW PALESTINIAN AND WEST BANK/GAZA ISSUES
WILL BE DEALT WITH IN A DELCARATION OF PRINCIPLES
GOVERNING A COMPREHENSIVE PEACE SETTLEMENT. THEY
ARE DIFFICULT BUT HAD NOT YET GONE LONG ENOUGH
TO REACH IMPASSE. SADAT'S DECISION CAME AS A
SURPRISE AND WE DO NOT REPEAT NOT THINK IT REFLECTED
A CRISIS IN THE ACTUAL NEGOTIATIONS.

13. ISRAELI REACTION HAS BEEN TO RESIST WHAT THEY
SEE AS PRESSURE TACTIC. THEY FEEL THAT HIS DECISION
WS NOT WARRANTED IN LIGHT OF THE PROGRESS THAT WAS
BEING MADE IN NEGOTIATIONS. THEY ARE CERTAINLY NOT
INCLINED TO BE MORE FLEXIBLE ON ISSUES AFTER THIS
MOVE. OUR IMMEDIATE OBJECTIVE IS TO GET NEGOTIATIONS
BACK ON THE TRACKS, BUT DECISIONS AS TO HOW
WE SHOULD NOW PROCEED MUST AWAIT SECRETARY'S MEETING
WITH SADAT AND SADAT'S SPEECH TO PEOPLES ASSEMBLY SATURDAY,
PURPOSE OF WHICH WE DO NOT KNOW BUT WHICH WE HOPE
WILL NOT CLOSE THE DOOR OR WORSEN THE ATMOSPHERE. WE
INTEND TO CONTINUE LOW KEY TREATMENT, REFLECTED IN
SECRETARY'S OBSERVATION THAT ALL NEGOTIATIONS "HAVE
THEIR UPS AND DOWNS", AND CONCENTRATE ON GETTING BACK
TO NEGOTIATIONS ON THE ISSUES. IN FINAL ANALYSIS,
THERE IS NO WAY TO MAKE PROGRESS ON HARD ISSUES AND
MOVE TOWARD COMPREHENSIVE NEGOTIATIONS FOR OVERALL
SETTLEMENT EXCEPT THROUGH ONGOING PROCESS OF
NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE PARTIES, TEDIOUS AS THEY
OFTEN SEEM. WE WILL HAVE CLEARER PICTURE
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AND FULLER REPORT FOR YOU AFTER SADAT MEETINGS.

14. SHOULD BE NOED THAT PUBLIC MOOD HERE IN

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ISRAEL HAS NOT BEEN AT ALL ENHANCED BY DECISION
TO WITHDRAW EGYPTIAN DELEGATION. AFTER TWO MONTHS
OF BUFFETING BY UNEXPECTED DEVELOPMENTS THAT HAVE MOVED
AHEAD AT A PACE FASTER THAN ISRAELIS HAVE BEEN ABLE
TO ADJUST TO, THEY APPEAR TO BE REACTING UNFAVORABLY
TO THIS LATEST SHOCK. THIS IS REINFORCED BY THEIR
INABILITY TO RELATE THE MOVE TO THE TALKS UNDERWAY,
WHICH THEY UNDERSTOOD FROM THE MEDIA WERE MAKING
PROGRESS, HOWEVER SLOWLY. END RESULT IS A PREVALENT
FEELING, REFLECTED IN THE "MORNING AFTER" PRESS,
THAT SADAT IS SIMPLY MANEOUVERING TO EXERT PRESSURE
ON ISRAEL THROUGH US, A POSSIBILITY WHICH INEVITABLY
DRAWS ISRAELIS TOGETHER IN SUPPORT OF THEIR
GOVERNMENT.
VANCE

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